



SAING-KO

SOLDIER
OF THE CROSS



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SAING-KO, SOLDIER OF THE CROSS

By Harriet R. King

Saing-ko was born in Kansas, before the Medicine Lodge Treaty. His father, O-ah-te, was a Mexican captive; his mother was Kiowa. After the Medicine Lodge Treaty in 1867 the Kiowas were given land on a Reservation in Oklahoma, and the Kiowas came into this Territory of Oklahoma for their home. Their land extended down to northern Mexico and south western Texas, so the Kiowa raids led them down into Texas and Mexico. The land was given by the Government, but later they made the excuse that the land belonged to the South, and took it back. The Government made no other grant, however, in place of this land in Texas and the Kiowas lost the land entirely. They settled down on a reservation near Mountain View. Some of the early Kiowas on this reservation were Goombi, Queton, Kiowa George Poolaw, Big Tree, Gotebo, Goomda. They lived on the prairies with prairie dogs making their home there, too. There were no settlements—no towns—no white men—just Indians and prairie dogs and prairie.

To this new prairie land, Saing-ko, then a little boy, was brought. The first school

for Indians was opened at Fort Sill, but Saing-ko's father would not allow him to enter. He said that his little boy was too dear to him to allow him to leave home for a school. After he grew up, however, Saing-ko often wished that he might have learned to read, so that he could read the Bible.

He grew up on the prairie, doing just what other Indian boys did—shooting with his bow and arrow, fishing, learning to be “heap big” warrior; he became a strong, brave young Indian fighter. He was ever a fighter, at first for the old Indian interests, and later for the Christian faith. While still a young man, he loved and married Be-ah-tante, a strong character. Be-ah-tante was a widow who had a daughter, Goh-tah-mah, who also developed into a strong personality.

Saing-ko loved Be-ah-tante very deeply, and they were both always faithful to each other. Their married life was true and happy.

As Saing-ko grew older, he learned to believe in the peyote and its worship. Another Kiowa man, Poy-en-geah, was against peyote. He was at the head of an Indian band working against the United States Government. He prophesied that the Indians would overcome the soldiers.

Saing-ko at this time was one of the leaders in the peyote worship. Many times he and Gotebo had charge of peyote meetings. Poy-en-geah's group was against Saing-ko, and Saingo-ko said that Poy-en-geah's ideas of conquering the United States soldiers were foolish. One night during a peyote ceremony, Poy-en-geah's followers stuck a bear head inside the peyote tepee, making fun of it. This made Saing-ko and his followers very angry.

So the two groups were at war, and constantly fighting. Finally Poy-en-geah was worsted, and it came about in this way: It was in the spring that Poy-en-geah said he would camp near Elk Creek, and all the Indians who wanted to be protected from the great cyclone which would destroy all homes but his camp, must come to him. Great numbers of Indians came to his camp. Nearly all the children were taken from the Indian school at Anadarko to the camp of safety, as they called Poy-en-geah's camp.

The soldiers were called on to help in this emergency. Joshua Given, an educated young Kiowa, came to the assistance of the soldiers. He talked with Poy-en-geah and said that two soldiers would kill Poy-en-geah, and if at the end of three days, he would come back to life, all the Kiowas would come and join him. If not, he would lose all power.

Poy-en-geah gave up, for he knew he could not work this miracle. So every one went back to his camp, and the children to school, and this movement died out.

Saing-ko had something to do with the old ghost dance. Chalenon and Saing-ko went to the Arapaho country. An Arapaho man came to Chalenon's tent and told a wonderful story. Away up from the North, people were coming and bringing a new world. It was to cover up the white people. A dance was originated, called the Messiah Ghost dance. The first time Jesus came he was killed, but now He was coming again to the Indians, and they would not kill him, but accept him. So they started this ghost dance. Saing-ko joined this, but he soon discarded it. Apeahtone went into the north country, into Wyoming, to see his mother who had died, and who was to come with this new world. He saw the man who was claiming to be the Messiah—a Carlyle Indian. Apeahtone saw that it was all a fraud, and so advised the Kiowas. Thus this ghost dance religion died out about 1890.

Soon another ghost dance religion sprang up. People would shout and dance and faint away, pretending to have visions of loved ones who had died. Saing-ko did not believe in this religion either. But he did believe very strongly in peyote. Another

strong peyote leader was Tonecote. Together they led in many peyote feasts and ceremonies.

Then came the missionaries, Miss Reeside, Miss Ballew, Miss Julia Given, telling of a religion different from any of the old heathen religions; of a Messiah infinitely greater and more wonderful than any of the old legends. At first Saing-ko did not believe, but as the missionaries patiently, time after time, told the beautiful old, old, story, little by little the light penetrated the heart of Saing-ko, and he believed. He came forward and confessed Jesus as his savior. When some one asked what he would do with peyote, he replied, "Throw it away." He took Jesus only, as his guide. Already, Gotebo had begun to walk in the Jesus Way.

Tonecote was furious. He did not like the missionaries. He was holding strong to the peyote worship.

A peyote feast was planned for a sick man, Goodle-quo. Tonecote was to be the doctor. The beef was butchered, and Saing-ko came over to eat beef. A hot bitter argument came between Saing-ko and Tonecote. He said "Saing-ko, what do you mean by leaving us?" Don't you know it's dangerous to take white man's road? Jesus is only white

man's Jesus, and not for Indians. You better give it all up, and go back into peyote road."

Saing-ko said, "What you mean, me give up Jesus road? I take this new road, I keep it."

Tonecote said, "You better give it up."

Saing-ko said, "I won't give it up."

Tonecote asked, "Do you want to die?"

Saing-ko replied, "I am ready to die. I am not afraid. You are making me strong. I will pray to Jesus. He will help me."

Tonecote said, "You try talk smart to me. I won't join your religion."

Saing-ko answered, "I won't give up this Jesus way. I believe in it. I see all these Indian religions. One man say he bring buffalo back. He fail. One man say he bring back dead people. He fail. One man say he bring back the sun. He fail. But these missionaries say that Jesus died to save me, and I believe them. I hold to this."

Tonecote said, "You'll die in three days."

Saing-ko rode off on his pony. He left the beef, and even forgot it, in his great dis-

tress of mind. Straight to the home of the missionaries, he rode, for comfort.

When he reached their little cottage, Miss Reeside saw him, and said, "Saing-ko, what's the matter with you? Your face is sad. What's the trouble?"

Then Saing-ko poured out the whole story of the bitter quarrel and of Tonecote's threat. He said, "Tonecote is strong. Let us pray to Jesus to conquer this wickedness."

So they all knelt and prayed that the true religion would overcome the false. Then they ate dinner, and Miss Reeside said "Saing-ko, don't be afraid. God will protect you. If Satan comes in the way, Jesus will be your shield." So Saing-ko was comforted and cheered.

That afternoon Tonecote went to Cloud Chief, a town near by, and got whiskey. He drank it, and felt good, and came home, still talking about Saing-ko, and how he was to die in three days. It was time for the peyote meeting, and he must soon go to the peyote tepee. Pretty soon his wife heard a sound, and went to him as he lay on the bed. Tonecote was dead. Then there burst out a great weeping and wailing. Every one was frantic. Some cut themselves with knives. Miss Reeside and the other missionaries ran to comfort them, and their dresses were all covered with blood.

When Saing-ko found that his enemy was struck dead, a great awe came into his heart. Next day a prayer meeting was held. Saing-ko said, "I'm sorry for this man, because he is lost. Perhaps I can help his relatives to become Christians."

Saing-ko did try, and some of these came.

At a camp meeting later, Saing-ko talked, trying to help the Comanche Indians who are strong for peyote. He told the story of Elijah and the true God, and the worshippers of Baal. He said that Baal was like the Indian's old religion. He told the whole story of Elijah and said, "That is the religion we should have, and not the gods who won't hear us. I believe in the true God, not in idol gods."

Saing-ko never compromised with heathen beliefs. He believed the missionaries of the Home Mission Society. He said they had brought the greatest thing that ever came to the Indians.

Saing-ko said that the political road was like an all-day sucker. "There's a little sweetness on the stick, but when you eat this sweetness what do you have left? Nothing but a stick. Their talks are like that. But Jesus way is different."

One day he took an old coat and threw it away off. He said "My old sins are like that. I throw them all away."

Saing-ko loved to have Sunday come. He loved as deacon in the church to bring in the Lord's Supper. He always stood with the missionaries. He loved the Association meetings, and to call camp, early in the morning. Early, about 4 or 5 o'clock, Saing-ko's voice could be heard, calling the people to wake up, and come to the Jesus meeting.

When Be-ah-tante was taken ill, Saing-ko very lovingly and tenderly cared for her. Finally, he was left alone, for Be-ah-tante was called to her Heavenly Home. Saing-ko was quiet and dignified in his great grief, and kept faithfully on, serving the Jesus whom he loved.

But at last the Great Father sent for him, and today he is happily serving in that beautiful Home where Be-ah-tante and all other loved ones have gone. Perhaps he is thanking Miss Reeside and Miss Ballew and Mrs. Julia Hunt for bringing the wonderful story of Jesus to the Kiowas.

The life of Saing-ko goes on, in the Kiowa tribe.

"Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever."

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